

He was a really pious and godly old man. I have often heard him praying at his meetings, in the stillness of the night — over a quarter of a mile away. He was known on the plantation as "Sailor Tom." He acquired his soubriquet of Sailor by an incident which happened some years before I knew him well. He had wrought himself up by his devotion and protracted prayer to believe that God would grant him anything he asked — taking that great truth of the gospel literally. So he announced to his colored brethren that God had heard his prayer, and would grant his desires. They suggested to him that he should do what so many scientific men are now trying to do, that is, "fly like a dove to his cot." So, on the morrow, Uncle Tom climbed on top of the barn, and, with a bundle of fodder under each arm, he leaped from the roof and sailed straight to the ground, where he was picked up and carried to his home with a broken limb. This discomfiture did not weaken his faith.

Slaves Members of White Churches

Hundreds of the slaves, during the period of my childhood, were members of the white churches, and were served at communion season by the elders, at their seats in the gallery. These elders were often their masters. In that day and time, no one in the South seemed to doubt the salvability of the Negro, as so many educated and prominent men do now. The type of simple-hearted, Christian, colored servants, who often exercised a sweet influence for good over the children of their master, has grown rarer as we recede from the days of the past.

New Crime Against the Family

The relations between the family of the owner and the slaves of his household were often very affectionate, and in all the period before the war, I do not remember ever to have heard of crime against the family of the planter being committed by a slave. One may be pardoned, I hope, who has the retrospective of almost three quarters of a century, if he cannot absolve himself from the thought that in the olden times there was a simplicity and purity in the Christian character of both white and colored, above the average of what is now seen.

When the Negro was Fresh from Africa

In the period of slavery, when the Negro was fresh from Africa, and the superstitions and savagery were strongly embedded in his character, it would seem that it would have been more diffi-

cult to reach him with spiritual truth than now, with the glow of light and education in his face — yet the facts do not sustain it. There can be no more satisfactory evidence of the religious condition of the Negro half a century ago than in the fact that in a brief period after the end of the war, innumerable colored churches sprang up all over the South, and they were all supplied with pastors before any theological seminary was thought of.

Some of those pastors, whose call had doubtless come to them in the days of slavery, were men of exemplary piety, and filled high offices in their church, with the respect and confidence of not only their own but of the whites also.

The Old Type of Negroes

In addition to this potent fact, no one can travel in the South, and come in contact with the Southern whites, without hearing on all sides expressions of sincere sorrow over the departure of the old type of Negroes who have come out of slavery. Their honesty, their industry, and their politeness, endeared them to the whites. I could not enumerate the instances in which southerners have been pall-bearers at the funerals of this class of Negroes, and in some instances have erected monuments to them.

The Hope of Evolving Some Plan

A race that could produce such men and women, whose virtues and beautiful lives were thought by the family of their owners to be worthy of being perpetuated by monument, must surely still have in it those qualities which constitute a solid foundation for building Christian character upon. It is this hope of evolving some plan that shall work mightily for the uplift of this race, which involves the welfare also of the white race, that has brought together this Conference of white and Negro representative men, from North and South, animated by the spirit of love to our common Lord and Master, whatever may be its result.

What an enviable position in every Christian heart must those dear people ever hold who conceived it and have made it possible! What burdens of labor and anxieties of heart have they not borne in solving its delicate questions and perfecting all its plans! It is the prayer of every heart that God will give them a blessing above all they ever hoped or expected from it.